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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1394
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1583
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1449
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1587
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0254
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0850
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1215
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1642
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4046
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1412
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2070
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0710
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1804
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000343

SIPDIS

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AF/S FOR S. HILL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
USAID FOR M. COPSON AND E. LOKEN
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: WOZA POWER OUTAGE PROTESTS DRAW HARSH POLICE
RESPONSE

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.5 b/d

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Over 500 Women of Zimbabwe Arise! (WOZA) supporters on April 19 held simultaneous demonstrations at several government offices in Bulawayo to protest frequent power outages; police arrested more than 80. Approximately 450 WOZA supporters staged a second series of simultaneous protests at five government offices in Harare on April 23; police arrested more than 50 more activists. In both incidents police used harsh treatment and threats to intimidate WOZA supporters. Undeterred, WOZA has plans for another demonstration in the Harare city center in early May.
End Summary.

WOZA Attempts To Turn Off GOZ's Lights

[1](#)2. (U) Continuing civil society's recent push against the Mugabe regime, over 500 WOZA supporters held simultaneous demonstrations on Thursday, April 19 in front of three Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) offices in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second city. The group was protesting frequent power outages and poor service as part of WOZA's "Power to the People" campaign, a series of actions leading up to the presidential elections planned for March 2008.

¶3. (U) Bulawayo police arrested more than 80 WOZA supporters and subjected numerous detainees to humiliating and harsh treatment. A news release from WOZA reported that police at the Luveve police station in Bulawayo forced 18 arrestees to strip and to remain undressed for the entire day. Police released all the WOZA arrestees by Friday evening after charging them with crimes against public order.

¶4. (U) Bulawayo police also arrested two young WOZA supporters when they attempted to deliver food for the arrestees. Two officers of the Zimbabwe Republic Police's notorious Law and Order division reportedly beat one of the two and tied her wrists with an electric cord, threatening to plug it in if she did not divulge the source of the money for the food. According to WOZA director Jenni Williams, the officers also told the young woman that they would "behead" Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, another WOZA leader, the next time they were arrested.

¶5. (C) Approximately 450 WOZA members followed-up the Bulawayo protests with similar demonstrations in front of five ZESA offices around Harare on Monday, April 23. Harare police arrested more than 50 more WOZA supporters, including 10 babies. The arrestees were taken to the Kuwadzana police station. A WOZA spokesperson told us that police were seen beating two of the detainees, but the extent of the injuries remained unknown. Police have denied the arrestees access to lawyers.

Comment

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¶6. (C) The police response to these latest WOZA protests indicates that the regime remains fearful of the growing momentum of civil society and opposition actions -- especially in light of the increased international attention on recent events. Despite arrests and occasional harsh treatment of WOZA protesters, Williams informed us that WOZA plans to organize another demonstration in the Harare city center in early May. End Comment.
DELL